



Mexican Wolf Recovery Program

Reintroduction Facts

Southwest Region

History

On March 29, 1998, 11 Mexican wolves were released from three holding pens on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest in eastern Arizona. Subsequent releases have occurred since 1998. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Game and Fish Department, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services, USDA Forest Service, and the White Mountain Apache Tribe have formed a Interagency Field Team (IFT) to manage them. The wolves are protected under a special federal regulation, the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Rule, published in the January 12, 1998, issue of the *Federal Register*, pages 1763-1772.

Adult Wolf Description:

- richly colored coat of buff, gray, rust, and black,
- About 5 ½ feet in total length (German shepherd size) and weighs 50-80 lbs.

Mexican Wolf



Jeff Robbins, Associated Press

- For comparison, a coyote is about 4 feet in total length and weighs 25-35 lbs.

Coyote



Martin Heinrich, FWS photograph

Please note:

Special guidance for dealing with wolf depredation is on the back of this sheet.

Key Rules:

Specific rules apply within the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area, which includes the area of Arizona and New Mexico south of I-40 and north of I-10. There are no private, tribal, or public land use restrictions for the wolf, except for limited temporary closures *on public land only*, that may be established within a 1-mile radius of occupied release pens, active dens, and rendezvous sites in the Apache-Sitgreaves or Gila National Forests.

You May Legally:

- Harass a wolf opportunistically, without injuring it, under certain circumstances (see "Key Definitions" below), but you need to report it within 7 days;
- Take (kill or injure) a wolf that is engaged in the act of killing, wounding, or biting cattle, sheep, horses, mules or burros (see "Key Definitions" below) on *private* or *tribal* land, but you need to report it within 24 hours; or
- Kill, injure, or harass a wolf in defense of a human life, but you need to report it within 24 hours.

You May Not Legally:

- Kill or injure a wolf just because it is near you or your property;
- Kill or injure a wolf that attacks your pet;
- Kill or injure a wolf attacking livestock on *public* land without a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service permit;
- Kill or injure a wolf that is feeding on dead livestock;
- Violate official closures around occupied release pens, active dens, and rendezvous sites;
- Shoot a wolf because you thought it was a coyote or something else (you are responsible for identifying your target before shooting); or
- Attempt to do any of the above actions or solicit someone else to do them.

Violations of the laws summarized above may subject you to prosecution. Criminal penalties may be imprisonment of not more than one year and a fine of up to \$50,000 and/or a civil penalty of up to \$25,000. You will not be prosecuted for unavoidably killing or injuring a wolf, such as a car accident, but you need to report it within 24 hours.

Key Definitions

Opportunistic, non-injurious harassment means as the wolf presents itself (for example, the wolf travels onto and is observed on private land near livestock). This is the only type of harassment permitted. You cannot track, attract, search out, or chase a wolf and then harass it. Any harassment must not cause bodily injury or death.

Engaged in the act of killing, wounding, or biting livestock means to be engaged in the pursuit and grasping, biting, attacking, wounding, or feeding upon livestock that are alive. If wolves are observed feeding on a livestock carcass, you cannot assume that the wolves killed the livestock because livestock can die from many causes and wolves will feed on carrion.

Call the Interagency Field Office at 928/339-4329 or 1-888/459-9653 to make any of the required reports regarding harassment or take of wolves, or to report wolf sightings or suspected livestock depredations. All wolf-sighting reports are recorded and evaluated. Sightings should be reported immediately, so the IFT can follow-up promptly.

For law enforcement issues, such as incidents of take, harassment of wolves, or dead or injured wolves, please call the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Law Enforcement Division in Arizona at 928/333-5245, and in New Mexico call 505/346-7828. To report sightings or incidents concerning wolves, call the 24-hour Mexican Wolf number at 1-888/459-9653, or the Arizona Game and Fish Department's 24-hour dispatch (Operation Game Thief) at 1-800/352-0700.

For other information on the Mexican wolf program, contact the Interagency Field Office at 928/339-4329, or toll free at 1-888-459-9653, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at 505/346-2525, the Arizona Game and Fish Department at 928/367-4281, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish at 505/476-8101, or the Fort Apache Indian Reservation at 928/338-4385. General information is also available at <http://mexicanwolf.fws.gov> or at <http://azgfd.com>.

Dealing With Wolf Depredation

What to Do...

If you suspect a Mexican wolf has killed your cattle, sheep, horses, mules, burros or pets:

Report It

Call the Mexican wolf Interagency Field Office at 928/339-4329 or toll free at 1-888/459-9653, or the Arizona Game and Fish Department's 24-hour dispatch at 1-800/352-0070. Please leave a message with your name and telephone number so that someone can get back to you. These numbers are checked frequently and appropriate agency representatives will be contacted. You may also contact your local Wildlife Services trapper. Wildlife Services is the lead agency to investigate wolf depredations. For additional information about the private depredation fund, which may compensate for livestock losses by wolves, contact: Craig Miller, Defenders of Wildlife Southwest Regional Office, 302 S. Convent Ave, Tucson, Arizona 85701. Telephone: 520/623-9653. E-mail: cmiller@defenders.org.

Protect the Evidence

* **Cover the livestock carcass or remains with a tarp and weight it securely.** This will keep other predators or scavengers from destroying evidence or disturbing any telltale signs of hemorrhaging common in wolf attacks. Use care to avoid stepping on track or harming other evidence.

* **Preserve tracks or scat** (droppings) that will prove a wolf's presence. Preserve this evidence by not trampling on it and, if necessary, covering it with plywood, weighted cans, or similar protection. Keep any other livestock away from the area.

* **Keep bystanders away from the area.** Vital evidence can be ruined by people walking around or moving a carcass.

* **Take photographs or videotape.** High quality photographs or videotape of any evidence is helpful. It is a good idea to place a common object (coins, keys, pocket knife) next to the evidence as you photograph it to document the scale. Also, for your own peace of mind, future protection, and for use as potential evidence, you may wish to videotape the Wildlife Services investigation.

What to Do...

If you see a wolf on your property:

Protect Your Interests

Even if the wolf is not harming livestock, report its presence to the IFT at 928/339-4329 or toll free at 1-888/459-9653. Later, if your livestock are attacked, or if you kill a depredating wolf, there will be a record that you previously reported a wolf on or near your property.

Wolves within the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (which includes the area of Arizona and New Mexico south of I-40 and north of I-10), may be harassed by anyone in a non-injurious and opportunistic manner under certain circumstances. If you harass a wolf you must report it to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service within 7 days. It is not advisable to wound or kill a wolf unless it is actually threatening human safety, which is considered very unlikely to happen based on decades of experience with gray wolves elsewhere. However, you may legally wound or kill a wolf on your private land if the wolf is "*engaged in the act of killing, wounding, or biting*" your livestock. Under the law this means "*to be engaged in the pursuit and grasping, biting, attacking, wounding, or feeding upon livestock that are alive. If wolves are observed feeding on a livestock carcass, you cannot assume that wolves killed the livestock because livestock can die from many causes and wolves will feed on carrion.*" If you wound or kill a wolf for any reason, you must report it to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service within 24 hours.

Unless you have a permit issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, you may not legally wound or kill depredating wolves on **public** land grazing allotments. If you experience depredation on public land, contact Wildlife Services or the toll-free number. They may be able to help you get the offending wolf removed and help you to get compensation from Defenders of Wildlife. After depredation by wolves on public land is confirmed, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may issue a permit to a livestock owner to kill wolves engaged in the act of depredating. These wolf control permits will be issued only after six or more breeding pairs of wolves exists within the Apache-Sitgreaves and Gila National Forest Boundaries.

Should you see a wolf feeding on dead livestock, do not shoot at it. If wolves are observed feeding on a carcass, you cannot assume that wolves killed the animal because livestock can die from many causes and wolves will feed on the carrion. Protect the evidence and call Wildlife Services and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Always contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service if you suspect a wolf den or wolf "rendezvous site" (a regular gathering area for packs with young pups) are on your private property or your public land grazing allotment, to determine what actions are appropriate.

What to Do...

If you *do* wound or kill a wolf:

Protect Yourself

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service considers any wounded or killed wolf to be a potential crime scene. You may be at risk for criminal penalties of imprisonment of not more than one year and a fine of up to \$50,000 and/or a civil penalty of up to \$25,000. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Wildlife Services will want evidence that the wolf was actually threatening human safety or was engaged in the act of killing, wounding, or biting livestock before they will agree that you acted within the law, so the preservation of evidence is crucial. Do not remove the wolf or the livestock. Report all wounded or dead wolves to the Interagency Field Office at 928/339-4329 or toll free at 1-888/459-9653 within 24 hours.

Thank you for your cooperation!

For More Information Contact:

- Mexican Wolf Interagency Field Office: 928/339-4329 or toll free at 1-888/459-9653
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 505/346-2525
- Arizona Game and Fish Department 928/367-4281
- New Mexico Department of Game and Fish 505/476-8101
- Fort Apache Indian Reservation 928/338-4385

January 2005